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Vancouver metro

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SFU researcher probes world of UFO, ghost and Sasquatch hunters to understand why they believe metroNEWS

Welcome to Canada's priciest home

REAL ESTATE

Of the top-10, most expensive homes in Canada, seven are in B.C.

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

The most expensive house in Canada — listed at $46 million — is a stately heritage home being sold together with two smaller houses in Vancouver's Shaughnessy neighbourhood.

But with a combined assessed value of just $15 million and restrictions on what can be built in the wealthy, heritage-protected area, that listing price may be highly aspirational.

"I don't know how these realtors paint what a luxury home is," said Vancouver realtor David Hutchinson, noting the three lots in question are owned by three different owners, yet zoning restrictions would likely prevent subdivision or building a multi-family development.

"They just seem to stick a price on it and if the price sticks, they had a sale. In the past they had a pretty good shot at it."

Just one house over $10 million has sold in the past three months, Hutchinson said. Some of the houses on the top-10 list (seven of the houses are in B.C.), compiled by real estate website Point2Homes, have been listed, but not sold, for several years now, he added.

Hutchinson does not sell luxury homes, but he does sell multi-million single family detached houses on Vancouver's pricey West side and East Vancouver. He's recently been showcasing on Twitter examples of houses that have sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars less than previously listed, a price decline trend that began happening after the provincial government introduced a tax on foreign buyers in Metro Vancouver in July 2016.

People seem to find the information useful, Hutchinson said, and he thinks it gives some hope to buyers who were previously completely priced out during a "wild west" run-up in prices between 2015 and 2016.

"A nice Point Grey home that sells for $2.4 million and it's tax-assessed at $3.3 million, that gives hope for the buyer that there is a chance to get in," Hutchinson said.

"It's expensive for sure, but it's not like last year where that house would have been a lot more expensive and not approachable for a lot of buyers."

Trump goes too far, Girl Guides take a stand metroNEWS

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Your essential daily news

Christy Clark backs move to stop employers from forcing high heels on female staff. **Canada**

BC Liberals pledge to create panel for political donations

POLITICS

In face of RCMP probe, premier vows review — after election

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

If she's re-elected May 9, Premier Christy Clark vowed Monday to launch an "independent panel" to examine political donations in B.C. — which her critics call a "system of legalized bribery."

"The panel will convene every eight years to collect input from the public and political parties, and make recommendations for potential changes," wrote BC Liberal campaign director Laura Miller in an email to donors and supports earlier in the day. On Monday, Clark's government also tabled a bill to require all donations over $100 be reported within two weeks.

But her vow to examine the province's unlimited political donations, even from outside the country, wouldn't actually take effect until after an election her party is entering with a $12-million war chest — and obviously only if she's re-elected.

"If the BC Liberals really wanted to they could make this change before election day," reacted Democracy Watch co-founder Duff Conacher in a statement.

Clark's panel promise came three days after the RCMP launched a criminal investigation of allegations that corporate lobbyists were making political donations to the government, then being illegally reimbursed by their employers for them.

On Friday, Elections BC handed over the investigation into the allegations to police in order to assure the public of their independence managing the May 9 election.

Last week, a Forum Research poll found that seven out of 10 British Columbians want to ban corporate and union donations, the allegations add fuel to long-standing criticism of what Conacher told Metro "amounts to a system of legalized bribery" in a province that's "one of the worst, one of the most undemocratic and unethical political donation systems of anywhere in Canada."

> **If the BC Liberals really wanted to, they could make this change before election day.**
> Duff Conacher

The BC Liberals' so-called "cash-for-access" exclusive fundraisers are also facing criticism for allowing high-paying donors access to Cabinet ministers without donors required to declare it as lobbying.

The government has insisted such fundraisers do not influence its policies; donors at such events have later been awarded billions of taxpayer-funded contracts. Clark announced she'd no longer collect a $50,000 annual salary top-up from the party for those fundraising activities, on top of her $190,000-a-year public salary.

"Our system is based on a fair and simple principle: parties compete for financial support from those who share their values, just like they compete for votes," said BC Liberal campaign co-chair Todd Stone, B.C. transport minister, in a statement on the party's website.

"Our voluntary real-time reporting of donations, in addition to strict spending limits on parties during campaigns, means that citizens can have confidence in our democracy."

Miller, the party's executive director, is set to appear in a Toronto court Sept. 11, where she faces criminal charges of breach of trust and mischief over the alleged deletion of documents when she was deputy chief of staff to Ontario ex-premier Dalton McGuinty in 2011. She maintains her innocence.

Premier Christy Clark speaks to a Greater Vancouver Board of Trade luncheon audience on Feb. 22, a day after her government tabled its final budget before a provincial election.
DAVID P. BALL/METRO

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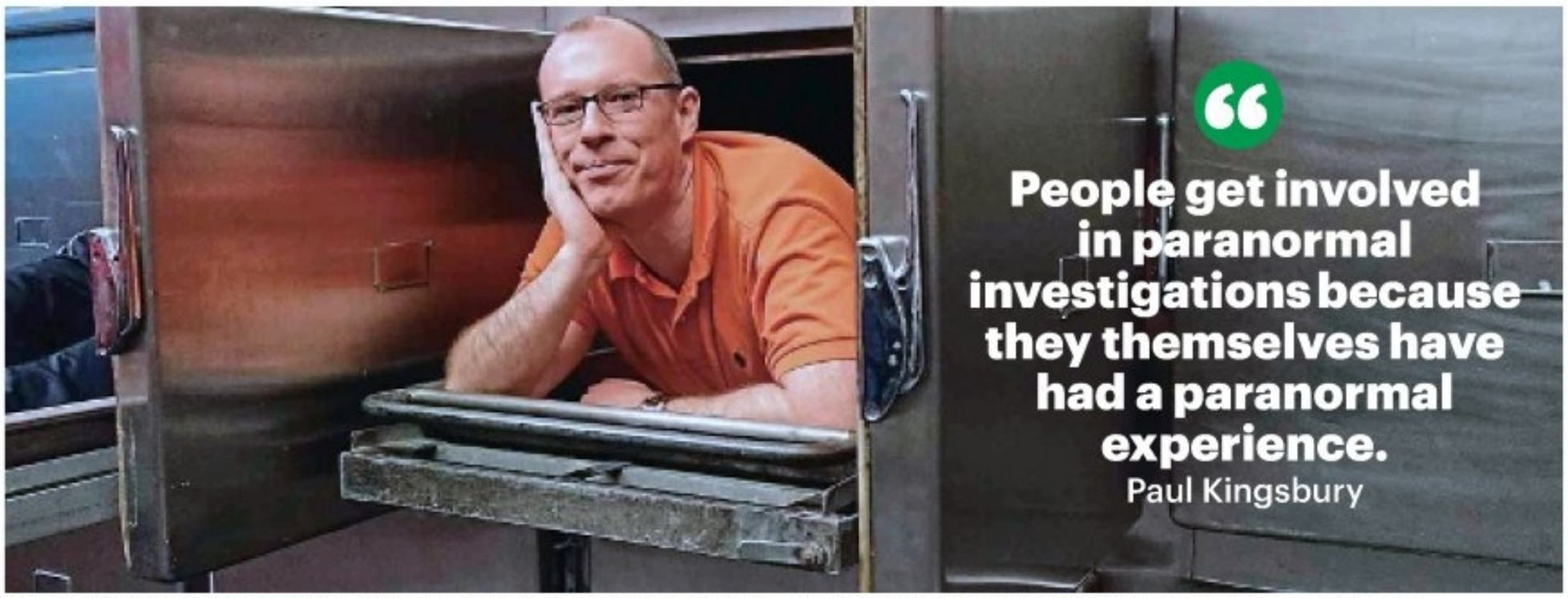
People get involved in paranormal investigations because they themselves have had a paranormal experience.
Paul Kingsbury

SFU geography professor Paul Kingsbury poses in the Vancouver Police Museum Morgue prior to a ghost investigation. COURTESY SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Prof's got his own X-Files

PARANORMAL

Researcher wants to get under skin of believers

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

Do you want to believe? A Simon Fraser University researcher is diving into the world of ghost, alien, and Sasquatch enthusiasts to understand what drives them to search for something many people don't even believe in.

There are dozens of ghost investigators in the Lower Mainland and thousands of people attend UFO conferences and Sasquatch expeditions in the United States every year, according to SFU professor Paul Kingsbury. Fascination with paranormal activity, including zombies, vampires, and ghosts has even spread to mainstream TV shows.

But some people go a step further and try to solve the mystery: Do ghosts exist? That quest is what brings some paranormal believers together said Kingsbury, a cultural geographer.

"It's the perfect object of desire because it's always out of reach," he said. "It's a fuzzy sound recording, it's never finally trapped, it's never finally caught up with so what you have here is the perfect device or object to incite desire."

Kingsbury and a group of SFU researchers are halfway through a four-year study on why some people are attracted to cataloguing evidence of UFOs, tracking Sasquatches or communicating with the dead.

He has attended two UFO conferences, one Sasquatch meeting, and several ghost investigations. Most people at these events are thrown into that world after experiencing what they think is a paranormal experience, he said.

"People get involved in paranormal investigations because they themselves have had a paranormal experience and are interested in knowing more and finding out what they experienced and being with like-minded people."

While cynical non-believers may think ghost investigators — people who look for evidence of ghosts — are out to scam grieving family members, Kingsbury says most investigators don't charge much for their services.

There are at least seven ghost investigator groups in the Lower Mainland, each with up to 10 members who offer ghost-related services, he said.

Meanwhile, UFO conferences function much like academic conferences, with keynote speakers, banquets, workshops, and Q & A sessions, he said.

"It's almost a parallel universe to the academic world."

And like any healthy academic community, there is also diversity and conflict within these groups.

The science-driven folk at UFO conferences often butt heads with alien-abductees, said Kingsbury. And some ghost investigators rely on electromagnetic frequencies while others claim to have a direct line of communication with the dead.

Kingsbury is scheduled to present his preliminary findings at a talk at SFU's Surrey Campus Wednesday.

Admission is free and more than 100 people have already RSVP'd to the event, he said.

When asked the all-important question of whether ghosts, UFOs, or Sasquatch are real, Kingsbury said he is more interested in the culture surrounding paranormal activity.

"Geography is more than cold hard fact," he said.

ASSAULT

Nurses need more protection, union says

The BC Nurses' Union says nurses need more protection against violent patients. It's calling for harsher sentences for those who physically assault nurses and for more security personnel at healthcare sites.

About three violence-related injuries happen every day among B.C.'s healthcare and social workers, according to the union. That number was calculated from a 2015 WorkSafe BC report that found a 50 per cent increase in the overall violence-related injury rate from 2006 to 2015.

But even those numbers probably underestimate the real risk to healthcare workers, said BCNU president Gayle Duteil.

"When it comes to nurses, there's a chronic underreporting of violent incidents," she said. "We need to educate our management, the public, and our nurses that violence is not part of the job and it's not their fault."

Duteil says the union is calling for "the addition of trained security personnel at sites 24/7, enhanced education in workplace violence and legislated changes to the criminal code for harsher sentences for those who perpetrate violence against nurses." WANYEE LI/METRO

There's a chronic underreporting of violent incidents.
Gayle Duteil

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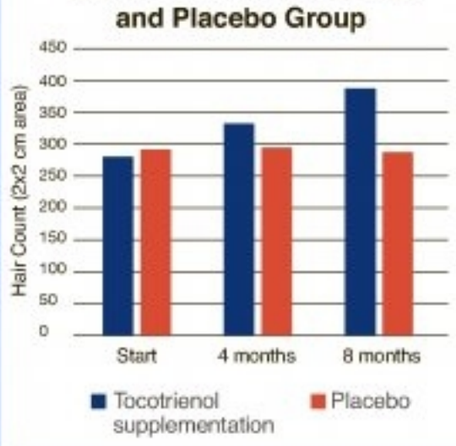
A recent study was done at the University of Malaysia with 38 people suffering from hair loss (alopecia)*. They were told to take a palm oil extract containing a special ratio of "super-antioxidants" called tocotrienols, known to lower oxidation in the scalp and thus allow for better – and new - hair growth. The results were surprisingly good!

STUDY RESULT:

Researchers studied an area of the scalp equal to 2x2 cm and counted the hairs at the beginning of the study, at 4 months and at 8 months. At the end of the study, the participants on the tocotrienol supplement had gained 34.5% more hair or an increase in average hair count from 285 to 383 hairs. Most of the group showed increases of 10-25%, but 40% of the group had more than 50% increase in hair growth. And only one person did not have any results.

Hair Count in Study Group and Placebo Group



In Canada, this complex of tocotrienols is now available in the Health Canada licensed product called Hair Gro™ from New Nordic. Hair Gro is available now at participating pharmacies and health food stores. For more information or to purchase directly, please visit our website or call: 1-877-696-6734.

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*Tropical Life Sciences Research 2010 "Effects of Tocotrienol Supplementation on Hair Growth in Human Volunteers" Beoy, Woei et Hay, University Sains Malaysia. To make sure this product is right for you, always read the label and follow the instructions.

Anti-sexploitation ads target teens

CHILD WELFARE

Non-profit urges them to recognize consequences

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

A Coquitlam-based non-profit hopes a new ad campaign will make tweens and teenagers think twice before sending compromising images of themselves to strangers who have befriended them online.

"It happens in every community and it can happen to every young person," said Diane Snowdon, founder of the Children of the Street Society.

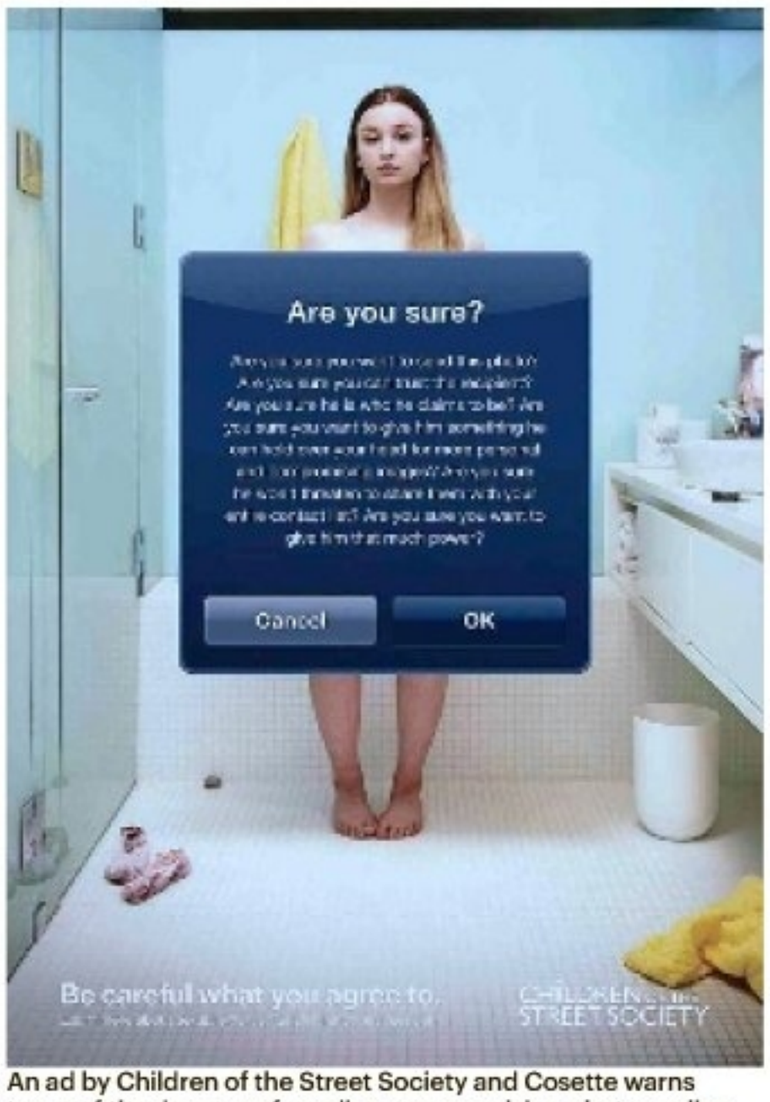
"It could be someone who has connected with them, and after having communication online convinces them to send them (an image). Once they have that first image, then they start extorting for more images."

B.C. teenager Amanda Todd, who took her life after being extorted and bullied online, is one of the most well-known victims of this kind of online predator.

Recently, an Australian university professor is alleged to have gathered thousands of images from children by convincing them he was singer Justin Bieber. Gavin Douglas Chalmers was charged last week with 931 sex offences against at least 157 children.

According to Cybertip, a tipline to report sexual exploitation of children, reports of this kind of extortion rose 40 per cent in 2016.

Children of the Street Society created the ads with Cosette, a Vancouver advertising agency.



An ad by Children of the Street Society and Cosette warns teens of the dangers of sending compromising photos online by warning about the "terms and conditions." CONTRIBUTED

They show young people who appear to be naked, their bodies covered by a "Terms and Conditions" box — similar to what would show up when an iPhone user downloads an update to an app.

The text reads: "Sending this photo will allow the recipient access to more compromising photos and videos of your person, to be made available at their request … Sending this photo will give a complete stranger unlimited access to your most private moments."

Snowdon says the ads are not just meant for young people, but for their parents as well.

"Parents have to take the initiative to talk to their kids," Snowdon said.

"Kids are not going to open up the conversation, because it has to do with their sexuality, the privacy of their lives and the fact that they don't think their parents understand technology. It has to be done in a non-judgemental way."

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Safety for women in five languages

ANTI-VIOLENCE AWARENESS

B.C. transition houses' ads for immigrants and refugees

This campaign ad reads "You are not alone." CONTRIBUTED/BCSTH

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

Can you say "You are not alone" in five languages?

More than 100 transition houses for women fleeing violence in British Columbia now can — thanks to an ad campaign that's been rolled out across the province to ensure immigrant and refugee women know they can turn to them for help.

"Transition houses are there for all women," explained Joanne Baker, the executive director of the B.C. Society of Transition Houses, in a phone interview. "And they're absolutely for immigrant and refugee women.

"We wanted to create something warm and welcoming around transition houses being safe, welcoming places where women's culture and language will be respected, and where they'll be taken care of."

The "Building Supports" public awareness campaign launched last month and runs through the end of March in five languages — Arabic, Farsi, Mandarin, Punjabi and English — with messages appearing on bus shelters, women's washrooms, and public transit across B.C. as well as on radio and television.

Baker explained that many immigrant women either don't know what is available to help them when escaping an abusive relationship, face language barriers if English isn't their first language, or else are worried that asking for help could cause them more problems or even put them in danger.

"These women have barriers to accessing transition houses," she told Metro. "They might come from a place where there's a lot of shame attached to state-funded programs for women, or they might assume you have to be a citizen to access them. And there might be concerns that their culture might not be respected.

"Because they and their children have experienced violence, some might be afraid their children might be taken from them. That's something many women have a fear of anyway."

But Baker emphasized that, while such concerns are valid, transition houses in the province don't require residents to be citizens or permanent residents to seek sanctuary, and that even women and children without legal status here can seek shelter there and staff will "work with the women to protect them to go through whatever immigration processes they need to go through to strengthen or confirm their status," she said.

"The most vulnerable women are those without status," she said. "Often abusers use that as a threat to women, to say, 'Your status here is tied to me supporting you.'

"Making yourself known to authorities is a leap of faith when you're scared that can be used against you … But (transition houses) are there at a point of crisis for any women fleeing violence."

The advertising campaign is a partnership between BCSTH, the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, and Simon Fraser University's FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. New Ad agency donated washroom ad spaces, and the City of Vancouver granted $28,000 for bus shelters.

> "Transition houses are there for all women."
> Joanne Baker

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Girl Guides nix trips to the States

MUSLIM BAN

Group worries members could be turned away at the border

Girl Guides of Canada is cancelling any trips to the United States, citing concerns that some members could be turned away at the border.

"It also has to do with safety," Sarah Kiriliuk, the organization's national manager of marketing and communication, said Monday. "We want to make sure that if our girls are travelling that they are not going to be in a risky or unsafe situation.... We can't leave a girl behind."

The organization, which has 70,000 girls and 20,000 women who are volunteer guiders, said it decided to cancel future travel because of the uncertainty over whether all of its members would be allowed to cross into the United States.

President Donald Trump has recently introduced an immigration ban that affects would-be visitors and immigrants to the U.S. from six Muslim-majority countries who do not hold a valid U.S. visa.

"We realize we had to stand by our organizational commitment of inclusivity and diversity," Kiriliuk said. "We talk the talk, we try to walk the walk. We're an inclusive and a diverse organization and this is just an extension of that.

Girl Guides of Canada will not be approving any new travel to the U.S. until further notice, the statement said.

This includes day trips and weekend outings or longer, and any travel that includes a connecting flight through a U.S. airport.

"Not being able to cross a border, can you imagine what would happen?" Kiriliuk asked. "A group shows up at the border and one girl can't go across — that puts everybody in a very difficult situation."

If there's a trip that has been planned and paid for, Kiriliuk said, then the organization is doing a risk assessment on those trips.

The organization is encouraging people to take domestic trips especially because this is 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Girl Guides is not the first organization to suspend trips to the U.S.

Several schools and school districts across Canada debated going ahead with trips south of the border following the first executive order issued by Trump in January.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

> **We realize we had to stand by our organizational commitment of inclusivity and diversity.**
> Sarah Kiriliuk

150 WAYS of looking at Canada

POSTCARD NO. 40

ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

IT WAS A COOL CRISP DAY IN LATE OCTOBER AND I DECIDED TO GO FOR A HIKE THROUGH THE BATTERY LEADING UP TO SIGNAL HILL IN ST. JOHN'S, N.L. ST. JOHN'S HOLDS A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART AS THE CITY WHERE I WAS BORN. THESE PICTURES HELP DESCRIBE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE OLDEST CITY IN NORTH AMERICA. **GLENN BARRON**

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Each day until July 1, Metro will feature one reader's postcard in our editions across the country, on Metronews.ca and our 150postcards Instagram page. Get involved by sending us a photo of your favourite place in Canada along with 25 to 50 words about why that place is special to you. Email us at **scene@metronews.ca** or post to Instagram or Twitter with the hashtag **#150postcards**.

Clark slams forced heels

Legislation that would make it illegal to require women to wear high heels is getting support from Premier Christy Clark.

"In some workplaces in B.C., women are still required to wear high heels on the job," Clark wrote on her Facebook page. "This isn't just old-fashioned; in 2017, it's unacceptable."

Clark says she backs the intent of a bill introduced by B.C.'s Green party leader, Andrew Weaver. The bill he introduced on International Women's Day would prevent employers from mandating footwear based on gender. THE CANADIAN PRESS

HALIFAX

Cabbie acquitted of sex assault no longer licensed

Bassam Al-Rawi, the driver acquitted of sexual assault this month, no longer has a licence to drive a cab.

ZANE WOODFORD/METRO HALIFAX

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Scotland seeks new vote amid Brexit spat

INDEPENDENCE

Move comes as U.K. clears final hurdle to begin EU exit

Scotland's leader delivered a shock twist to Britain's EU exit drama on Monday, announcing that she will seek authority to hold a new independence referendum in the next two years because Britain is dragging Scotland out of the EU against its will.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said she would move quickly to give voters a new chance to leave the United Kingdom because Scotland was being forced into a "hard Brexit" that it didn't support. Britons decided in a June 23 referendum to leave the EU, but Scots voted by 62 to 38 per cent to remain.

Scotland must not be "taken down a path that we do not want to go down without a choice," Sturgeon said.

The move drew a quick rebuke from Prime Minister Theresa May, who said a second referendum would be hugely disruptive and was not justified because evidence shows most Scottish voters oppose a new independence vote. She accused Sturgeon's Scottish National Party of political "tunnel vision" and called the referendum "deeply regrettable."

"It sets Scotland on a course for more uncertainty and division," May said.

Sturgeon spoke hours before Britain's Parliament approved a bill that will allow the U.K. to start the formal withdrawal within days. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is demanding a new independence vote as the United Kingdom's split with the EU looms. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Millions projected to lose their coverage

Nonpartisan analysts project that 14 million people would lose coverage next year under the House bill dismantling former President Barack Obama's health-care law. The estimate is a blow to Republicans.

Monday's estimate by the Congressional Budget Office says the number of uninsured would grow to 24 million by 2026.

The projections give fuel to opponents who warn the measure would toss millions of voters off insurance plans. Criticism has come from Democrats, Republicans from states that benefit from Obama's law and many corners of the healthcare industry.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi says Speaker Paul Ryan should pull the bill from consideration, saying, "It's really the only decent thing to do." Meanwhile, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer says the report demonstrates that the bill means higher costs and less coverage for consumers.

President Donald Trump backs the GOP plan.

Republican leaders have said their aim is to lower health care costs. They say coverage statistics are misleading because many people covered under Obama's law have high out-of-pocket costs that make health care unaffordable.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NETHERLANDS

Turkey launches sanctions over ministers' treatment

Turkey announced a series of sanctions against the Netherlands on Monday over its refusal to allow two ministers to campaign there, including halting political discussions and closing air space to diplomats.

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Seeing the forest for the cities

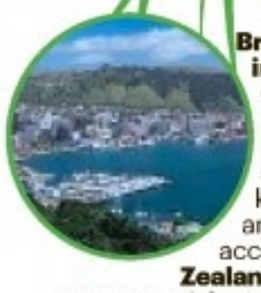
City life can be bad for you: Air pollution, excessive noise and a dearth of green spaces leave urbanites chronically sick and stressed-out, writes Florence Williams in a new book, **The Nature Fix**. But a walk in the woods or on the beach lowers heart rates and stress hormones, and may even help us feel more focused and sociable. With good planning, Williams writes, it's possible to create "cities of awe" with the benefits of the great outdoors built right in. **Here, five ways cities are connecting citizens to nature:**

Plant trees
One of the most important things cities can do is also the easiest. Trees attract birds, and birdsong lifts our spirits. The smell of cypress seems to ease fatigue. And that's not to mention the dramatic air-quality benefits. **Toronto** earned a shout-out from Williams for its 10 million trees.

Take a hike
Williams praised the walking trails along the tidal basin around **Seattle**. She says cities should make it as easy as possible to get her recommended minimum "dose" of five hours in nature every month. Urban noise can interfere with the benefits, but by incorporating "incredible visuals, wonderful smells and cool things to touch," cities can partly make up for it.

Bring parks to people
Nearly half of **Singapore** is covered with green space — a remarkable achievement in an Asian metropolis of 5.4 million. The city-state's goal is to get 90 per cent of its residents within 400 metres of a park. The number now stands at 70 per cent.

Bring out the best in bodies of water
Oceans, lakes and rivers are "soothing and universally loved" Williams said, so cities should keep them beautiful and make them easy to access. **Wellington**, **New Zealand** has a vast marine preserve, nicknamed the "snorkel trail," right inside the city limits.



Push kids to play
Immersion in nature has been linked to better mood and behaviour, increased focus and improved school performance in kids. **Fukuoka City, Japan** has taken disused school parking lots and transformed them into mini-ecosystems called biotopes, complete with resident ducks and swampy paddy fields to explore.

WORD ON THE STREET by Matt Elliott

City halls need to match the fast pace of city life

As I get older, I've started to think about the municipal projects under debate in terms of how old I'll be when they're finally completed.

I'll probably be past 35 by the time Toronto finally approves a comprehensive plan for laneway housing, for example. I'll be in my forties before the next major phase of waterfront development is complete. And when the first train rolls down the tracks of the city's long-planned downtown relief subway line, the odds say I could pay the seniors' fare.

Thinking about city building probably shouldn't make me contemplate my own mortality, but such is the nature of city government in Canada. Things move slowly at city halls.

But slowness doesn't need to be the status quo. Recently, some Canadian cities have shown a desire to streamline their processes, all in the service of moving a little faster.

Last week, the City of Vancouver announced a pilot project designed to speed up the approval process for low density development.

In Toronto, a city report released last spring showed that permitting round-the-clock construction can halve completion time and reduces costs by 10 to 20 per cent.

And in Montreal, a new 67-stop LRT plan backed by the province's pension fund has moved from announcement to environmental review in less than a year. That's furiously fast for a transit project.

Brian Kelcey, an urban planning consultant with experience working in the mayor's office in Winnipeg, highlights these kinds of things as examples of what he calls "fast government." He wants to see more of it.

"We have these decision-making processes that worry about cost and they worry about consultation – and those are all important things – but we haven't really built any of our systems to factor in the value of speed," he tells me.

Kelcey points to a bunch of things that tend to gum up the gears of government. Local politicians too often fall prey to a "desperate urge to accommodate everyone – no matter how impractical." Cities hold endless public consultation meetings even on issues where the outcome is inevitable.

And there's still a reluctance to adopt the tested solutions of other cities. "We often use pilot projects to relearn the lessons that other cities have already piloted," Kelcey adds.

There's no single lever for speeding up government, but Kelcey believes a part of it is a pretty simple shift in thinking.

"It needs to be a cultural change of managers, of councillors, of mayors, of citizens actually acknowledging out loud that there's a virtue to speed," he says.

Makes sense to me. I'll start. I'm Matt, I live in a city I want to see grow and improve — and I've got a need for speed.

Matt Elliott is an urban affairs columnist for Metro Toronto.

PUBLIC WORKS
The week in urbanism

Like the autobahn, but for bikes Berlin is looking at installing 13 new "bike highways," including two by the end of the year. They would be at least five kilometres long, four metres wide — to allow for safe passing — and separated from other traffic.

Like Smell-O-Vision, but for transit Singapore started a new program where 100 buses will emit subtle scents, including rose and peppermint. It's part of a mission to make riding the bus more attractive.

URBAN DICTIONARY
Induced Demand

DEFINITION The phenomenon when expanding a road's capacity simultaneously increases demand to use it and cancels out any perceived benefit, like easing gridlock.

USE IT IN A SENTENCE
The councillor wanted an urban highway to ease traffic, but city staff pointed out congestion would be at the same level in five years due to **induced demand**.

CITY CHAMP

Lourdes Juan is the founder of Calgary urban planning firm Hive Developments, which focuses on community outreach in planning. She is also founder of the LeftOvers Calgary, a non-profit that diverts food from landfills to supply local agencies.
@lourdesmjuan

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Neither Rooney Mara nor Daniel Craig will star in long-awaited sequel The Girl In The Spider's Web

Two strangers walk into a bar...and we get to watch the awkwardness

REALITY TV

Vancouver restaurant the scene for TV's blindest dates

Bartender/host Adam Snider from the show First Dates, which airs Tuesdays on Slice. HANDOUT

Two strangers walk into a bar. That's not the beginning of a joke, that's the premise behind First Dates. The series, which invites viewers to eavesdrop on couples as they squirm through a blind date, returns for a second season March 14 on Slice.

The First Dates franchise started several seasons ago in the U.K. This English Canada edition takes place at an upscale Vancouver restaurant. (A French Canadian version was shot in Montreal.) About a thousand potential daters applied; three-quarters were single women.

"Men are harder to find," says executive producer Toby Dormer. "That may be down to Vancouver: hard to find single men."

Greeting them at the restaurant is host/bartender Adam Snider. "I can usually tell right away if there's any chemistry," he says. "Of course there's a lot of nerves. First dates are scary, right?"

In the season's first episode, an exotic dancer is matched with a "strapping stuntman." A few tables over, a masseuse named Megan is, we are told, "looking to get her hands on Mr. Right." She's paired with Rob, a marine technician who seems lost at sea.

"How old are you anyways?" was one of Rob's charming openers. Things went downhill from there.

All the chemistry, fireworks, awkwardness and discomfort is captured by over 40 cameras.

"They're small, about the size of a pint of beer," says Dormer of the unmanned cameras. The daters — who can be in the restaurant up to two hours — quickly forget the cameras are there.

"It's about as close as you can get to being a fly on the wall."

What the cameras capture isn't always flattering.

"Vancouver women complained a lot about the men in Vancouver," says Dormer. "They feel they don't make an effort. Whereas the men felt the women were only after one thing, which is money."

Some, he also believes, are genuinely looking for love. Many, he feels, are simply fed up with online dating.

"It can be quite demoralizing," he says. "People in person don't always live up to their online profiles. It's human nature. You want to give the best impression of yourself that you possibly can."

Things have changed since Dormer's single days. Back then there was no Tinder, no swipe right to find the love of one's life. He met his wife of 11 years through friends.

Now he sees participants in his dating show race out at the end to meet up with another scheduled date. "It's so hard to meet someone, the pressure seems to be magnified even more today."

> **It's as close as you can get to being a fly on the wall.**
> Toby Dormer

Every show ends with a brief epilogue revealing if there was a love connection between the featured couples. There are some surprises in the season premiere, especially when viewers learn what came next for two gay daters who met at the restaurant.

Season 2 features straight, gay and lesbian couples.

"We have a trans woman," says Dormer. "It's simply who came to us."

One of the participants in the opener is deaf. In a later episode, a dater in a wheelchair is featured.

"Every person out there is welcome to be on the show," says Dormer. "We have kids who were 19 and we had people in their 70s. Searching for a partner, for the most part, is about as universal a theme as you can get."

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When home life and work life merge

PARENTING

BBC dad went viral, but role is usually held by 'hybrid' moms

Kristen Thompson
life@metronews.ca

If you spent more than a nanosecond online over the weekend, you probably saw the video of a toddler bombing her dad as he's giving a live Skype interview with BBC News.

You also probably laughed out loud as the little girl bounced into her father's home office, followed by a younger sibling in a walker, then their panicked mother who drags the kids out of the room. But for those working from home, that comedy of errors is all too familiar.

With many workplaces offering little flexibility as to when and where parents can work, and daycare costs continuing to rise, more parents are choosing to leave their careers to carve out new paths as freelancers or entrepreneurs.

More often than not it's women, not men, who are entering this new fray: not quite stay-at-home moms, not quite working moms, but some sort of hybrid version of both.

Irene Boekmann, assistant professor in the department of sociology at the University of Toronto, says children are a big driving factor forcing women from work, and that this doesn't tend to be the case for fathers.

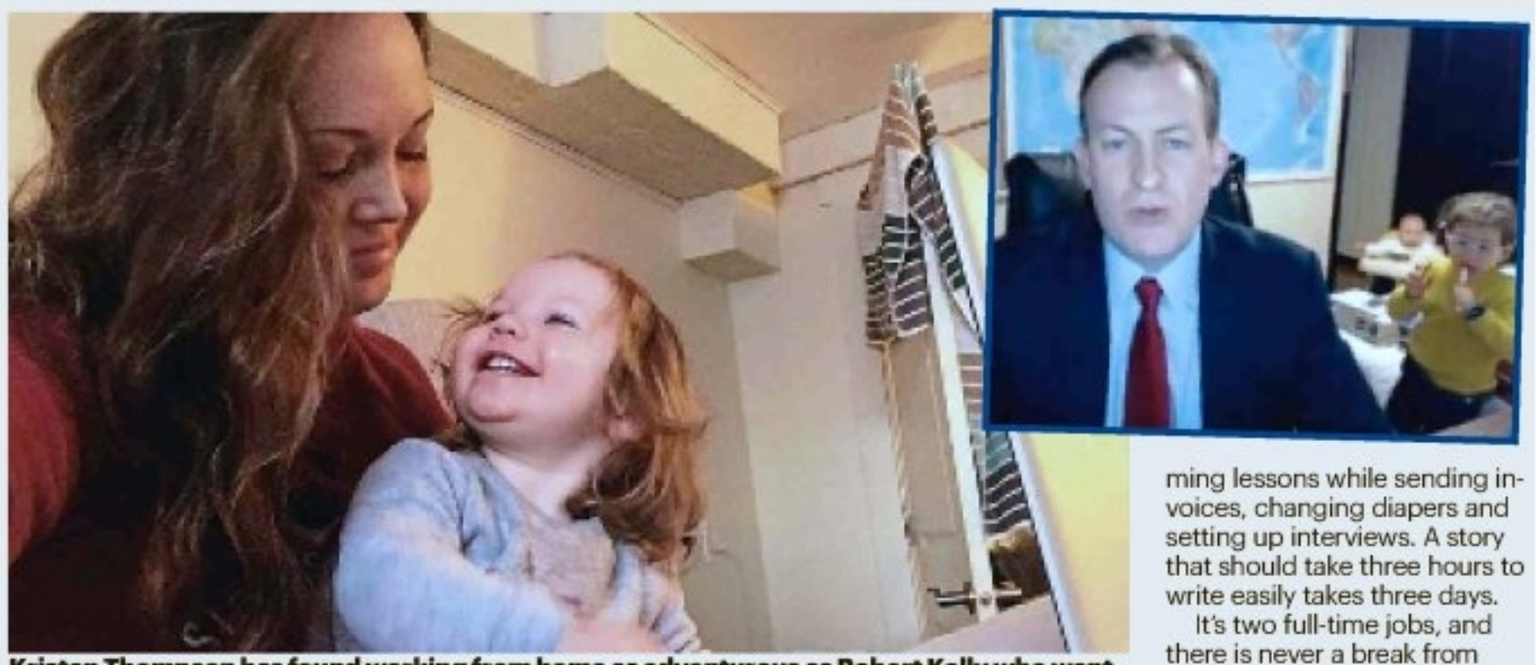
"There is definitely an interesting gendered story here," she said, pointing out that mothers with younger children are more likely to work from home than other women. "Research shows that children increase Canadian women's (but not men's) likelihood of self-employment."

When home life and work life are one in the same, there's no real break from either.

Melissa Milkie, a sociology professor at the University of Toronto, says a lack of feasible part-time professional work, along with workplaces with inflexible work hours, can be push factors that drive women to entrepreneurial work from home.

"The unfriendly workplace, full time work, (they're) not easy to combine with motherhood," Milkie said. "But it may be difficult to re-enter the workforce down the road.

"What we call 'role-blurring' between work and family roles, is actually linked to more distress for workers — more anxiety, depression, anger and so on." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



Kristen Thompson has found working from home as adventurous as Robert Kelly who went viral when his kids crashed his live TV interview with the BBC (inset). CONTRIBUTED

Voices shouting 'mom' under the door: I felt his pain

The first time I watched the BBC video, I laughed out loud — then I cringed, because I've been there.

I've nearly dislocated my shoulder trying to shoo my kids out of the room while doing an interview, or typed frantic "get them out of here!" texts to my husband as tiny voices shout "mom!" under the locked door.

It sounded luxurious at first: as a freelance journalist I could choose my own schedule, work in pyjamas, have wine at 3 p.m. But the reality ended up being a lot messier. The truth is I feel I'm pulled in more directions than I can manage.

When home life and work life are one in the same, there's no real break from parenting or working — you're doing both at all times.

Household chores that were divided up evenly when I worked in the office now fall almost exclusively on me as my husband's work hours are set, and mine are flexible. So I do the bulk of daycare drop offs and grocery shopping, meal prep and doctor's appointments. Crammed in between all of that I'm researching, interviewing and writing. I'm signing kids up for swimming lessons while sending invoices, changing diapers and setting up interviews. A story that should take three hours to write easily takes three days.

It's two full-time jobs, and there is never a break from either. Because of this, I often feel like nobody really gets my full attention — not my work, and not my family.

Self-employment has been a wonderful opportunity for my family. It meant a pay cut, but it has also meant a degree of freedom I never had in my previous working life.

That doesn't mean it's easy, as the parents in the viral video can tell you. As I type this, my 1-year-old is lying on my chest and my 3-year-old is yelling for help from the kitchen. It's hard. But it's also the best.

Stretching: The scientific truth

EXERCISE

Body experts say the way we warm up may be all wrong

Jonathan Forani
life@metronews.ca

Among the glut of exercise advice, one thing seemed settled long ago: don't forget to stretch.

So we pulled our limbs in every direction, tugged on our ankles and reached for our toes before every workout.

But in recent years stretching doubt set in, as studies cast doubt on its effectiveness and some suggested it could lead to injury.

"An exercise in nothingness?" headlines read. If it doesn't work, why bother?

"There's been a lot of confusion," says David Behm, a leading stretching expert from Memorial University in Newfoundland.

But Behm and an international group of researchers are closer to understanding the value of stretching and how to do it after conducting an expansive review, published last year, of 150 studies.

Their conclusion? Yes, you should stretch — but not the way you think. The key to the pre-workout regimen is "dynamic" stretching. Also called "movement practice," it has become an established decree of fitness experts, despite not fitting most conceptions of "stretching."

"Most people think 'I want to get more flexible and I want to get stronger,'" Behm says, but the traditional brand of stretch-and-hold, sit-and-reach exercises, or what is called "static" stretching, won't help your workout. In fact, an extensive stretching routine could make you weaker and lead to injury, Behm says, comparing it to using a slack elastic band to pull a wagon, instead of one that's taut.

Dynamic stretching involves a gambit of movement exercises that take the joints through their full range of motion — high-knees, butt-kicks, walking lunges, deep bodyweight squats, trunk rotations and arm swings to name a few.

"It's a very different type of thing than what people consider stretching," says Greg Wells, assistant professor of kinesiology at the University of Toronto. "It's great before almost every single type of activity."

Static stretching won't do that. Instead, it slows the body, which is the opposite of what's needed for a workout.

"What you want to do is prime your body for the motion," says Kathelen Trotter, Toronto fitness expert and author of Finding Your Fit.

"The body needs a really good balance of mobility and flexibility," Trotter says, noting static stretching can help with the latter, but extensive stretch-and-hold routines should be a separate workout altogether.

Static stretching is also a good practice for relaxation since it calms the nervous system down.

"It's an amazing way to decrease stress," says Wells. "If you've had a tough day, if you're wired, if you get home at night and you feel like you're about to explode, stretching is one of the most amazing things you can do. Turn on a show and instead of lying on the couch, stretch for half an hour."

While the research has come a long way, there's more to be done. Stretching post-workout has not been studied at length, but Behm says he would warn against stretching after an especially rigorous routine.

"If the workout has been quite fatiguing then the muscles are weaker and an intense stretching bout could overcome the weaker muscles and lead to muscle strain injury."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

What you want to do is prime your body for the motion. The body needs a balance of mobility and flexibility. Kathleen Trotter

STATIC VS DYNAMIC

Before runs, squat and lunge

While more traditional static stretching is good for relaxation, fitness experts insist **dynamic stretching** is much more important before any rigorous activity.

Before a long run, you might warm up with a **short jog** followed by **deep squats** that grease the legs and hips, Wells suggests. **Walking lunges** are also encouraged.

Dynamic stretching is about getting the body ready for physical activity: "waking the body up, activating the muscles, lubricating the joints, and increasing the body's temperature," says Greg Wells, assistant professor of kinesiology at the University of Toronto.

ISTOCK

JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING

Witnessing the birth of our own home-grown star system

THE SHOW: The Canadian Screen Awards (CBC)
THE MOMENT: The birth of a star system

Midway through the two-hour ceremony honouring excellence in film, television and digital, the director Atom Egoyan introduced Lifetime Achievement Award winner Christopher Plummer as "quite simply, the best stage and screen actor this country has produced."

Plummer was as professionally modest as ever. "I'm so old my first word as a baby was in Latin," he began, and concluded with, "The curtain has not yet fallen [on my career]. It's simply stuck."

So clearly deserving is Plummer, you have to wonder who the Academy of Canadian Film and Television could have given this award to before him. But the night provided some candidates who might earn it down the road.

Natasha Negovanlis with her CSA award. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Tatiana Maslany won best actress for both the film The Other Half and the TV series Orphan Black. Wunderkind-turned-Wunderadult Xavier Dolan won for writing and directing It's Only the End of the World.

Other awardees included Stephan James, Molly Parker, Vincent Cassel, Catherine O'Hara and Tantoo Cardinal.

Notice a pattern? Canada keeps insisting it doesn't have a star system, but it sure looks to me like we have stars.

Yeah, Dave Chapelle got a standing ovation just for showing up, but the Icon award he presented was a worthy one, to Montreal's Just for Laughs.

And guess why: because it creates and nurtures comedy stars.

Then, in the most promising development, The Fan's Choice award went to Natasha Negovanlis, who plays the title character, a queer vampire, on Carmilla, a digital series. It wasn't exactly the Big Bang, but small explosions create stars, too.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

OBITUARY

Popular author Rosenthal passes away

Amy Krouse Rosenthal, a popular author, filmmaker and speaker who brightened lives with her wide-eyed and generous spirit — and broke hearts when she wrote of being terminally ill and leaving behind her husband Jason —died Monday at age 51.

Rosenthal had been diagnosed in 2015 with ovarian cancer. Her death was confirmed by her longtime literary agent, Amy Rennert, who said Rosenthal "was the most life-affirming person, and love-affirming person." Fellow author John Green tweeted: "She was a brilliant writer, and an even better friend."

A Chicago native and longtime resident, Rosenthal completed than more 30 books, including journals, memoirs and the bestselling picture stories Uni the Unicorn and Duck! Rabbit! She made short films and YouTube videos, gave TED talks and provided radio commentary for NPR, among others.

She also raised three children and had a flair for random acts of kindness, whether hanging dollar bills from a tree or leaving notes on ATM machines.

"I do what feels right to me. If it resonates or plants some seeds, great," she told Chicago magazine in 2010.

While her books were noted for their exuberant tone, she started a very different conversation early this month with a widely read Modern Love column she wrote for The New York Times. Rosenthal told of learning about her fatal diagnosis, and, in the form of a dating profile, offered tribute to Jason Brian Rosenthal. The essay was titled, You May Want to Marry My Husband.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESSS

Rosenthal recently wrote the essay You May Want to Marry My Husband for the New York Times.

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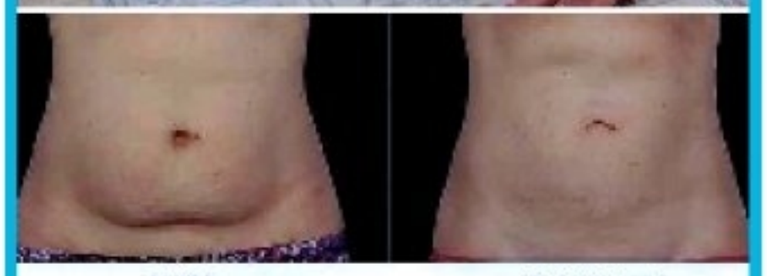

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With up to 70 million office pools, more Americans will fill out NCAA brackets than voted for either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election

NHL MARCHAND MARCHES BRUINS PAST CANUCKS
Boston Bruins centre Riley Nash is checked by Vancouver Canucks centre Henrik Sedin at Rogers Arena on Monday night. Brad Marchand led the Bruins to a 6-3 victory by scoring three third-period goals. He also had an assist for a four-point night. Markus Granlund scored twice for the Canucks, with both of his goals scored in the first period.
DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Pospisil bows out of BNP Paribas Open
Vasek Pospisil's run at the BNP Paribas Open came to a disappointing end Monday night.

Two days after upsetting world No. 1 Andy Murray in the second round, the Vancouver product fell 7-6 (4), 3-6, 5-7 to Dusan Lajovic in third-round play.

The 106th-ranked Serbian benefited from five Pospisil double faults and won four of five break points.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Flames extend their winning streak to 10 games
Kris Versteeg scored the shootout winner Monday night as the Calgary Flames beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 4-3 to equal a franchise record with their 10th straight victory.

Versteeg moved in slowly and made a nifty deke before zipping a shot upstairs on Marc-Andre Fleury. Brian Elliott stopped Evgeni Malkin, Sidney Crosby and Phil Kessel to clinch the win.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Raucous Mexican crowd awaits Caps

SOCCER

Robinson and co. visit Tigres in first leg of semifinal

Estadio Universitario is known as "The Volcano." JULIO CESAR AGUILAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Carl Robinson walked into a number of intimidating venues as a player.

The head coach of the Vancouver Whitecaps loved the atmosphere home fans created at the Millennium Stadium while he was a member of the Welsh national team.

He also loathed trips as an opponent to Liverpool's Anfield — a cathedral of world soccer where it feels like supporters are breathing down your neck.

"They can put real pressure on you and make it real uncomfortable," said Robinson.

While it won't be Britain, the Whitecaps are expecting a similar experience on Tuesday night in Monterrey, Mexico, when they visit Tigres UANL in the first leg of their CONCACAF Champions League semifinal.

The opening match of the two-game aggregate series is set for Estadio Universitario, a venue nicknamed "The Volcano."

"It will be difficult, make no doubt about that," Robinson said on a conference call Monday. "They're going to have 40,000 (fans) and they are probably going to throw the kitchen sink at us in the first five, 10 minutes because I'm sure in their minds they would like to put the tie out of sight as soon as they can."

> **"It can't be won over one leg, but it can certainly be lost."**
> Carl Robinson

Playing in Mexico has historically been a nightmare for Major League Soccer teams, who are a combined 2-42-8 in Champions League play. That's two wins in 52 games.

"The scheduling has always probably favoured the Mexican teams from where they are in their season to where MLS teams are, but also the quality and the money and the salary cap details that we have to deal with that they don't," said Robinson.

The Whitecaps beat the New York Red Bulls 3-1 in the Champions League quarterfinals to move onto the last four of the competition that features teams from North America, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Vancouver is the third Canadian team to make the semis after Toronto FC in 2011-12 and the Montreal Impact in 2014-15.

"It's something that a lot of players may never get again, so I want them to go out and enjoy it," said Robinson. "I want them to go and relish it. I don't want them to sit in the changing room after the game and think they've got any regret.

"It's 90 minutes of football against a top Mexican team in a hostile environment."

The rematch with Tigres goes April 5 at BC Place Stadium.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

MAKE IT TODAY

Delicious Avocado and Tuna Sandwich

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

Packing your lunch can feel as insurmountable of a task as hitting the gym before the office but this sandwich errs on the side of easy and delish so you can make both happen in the morning. OK, fine, you can skip the gym.

Ready in 10 minutes
Serves 2

Ingredients
- 1 can tuna packed in water
- 1 stem of celery chopped fine
- 1 or 2 Tbsp mayonnaise
- 3 or 4 cherry tomatoes chopped
- 1 carrot, grated
- 1/2 avocado sliced
- 2 tortillas

Directions

1. In a bowl, mix tuna, celery, tomatoes and mayonnaise.

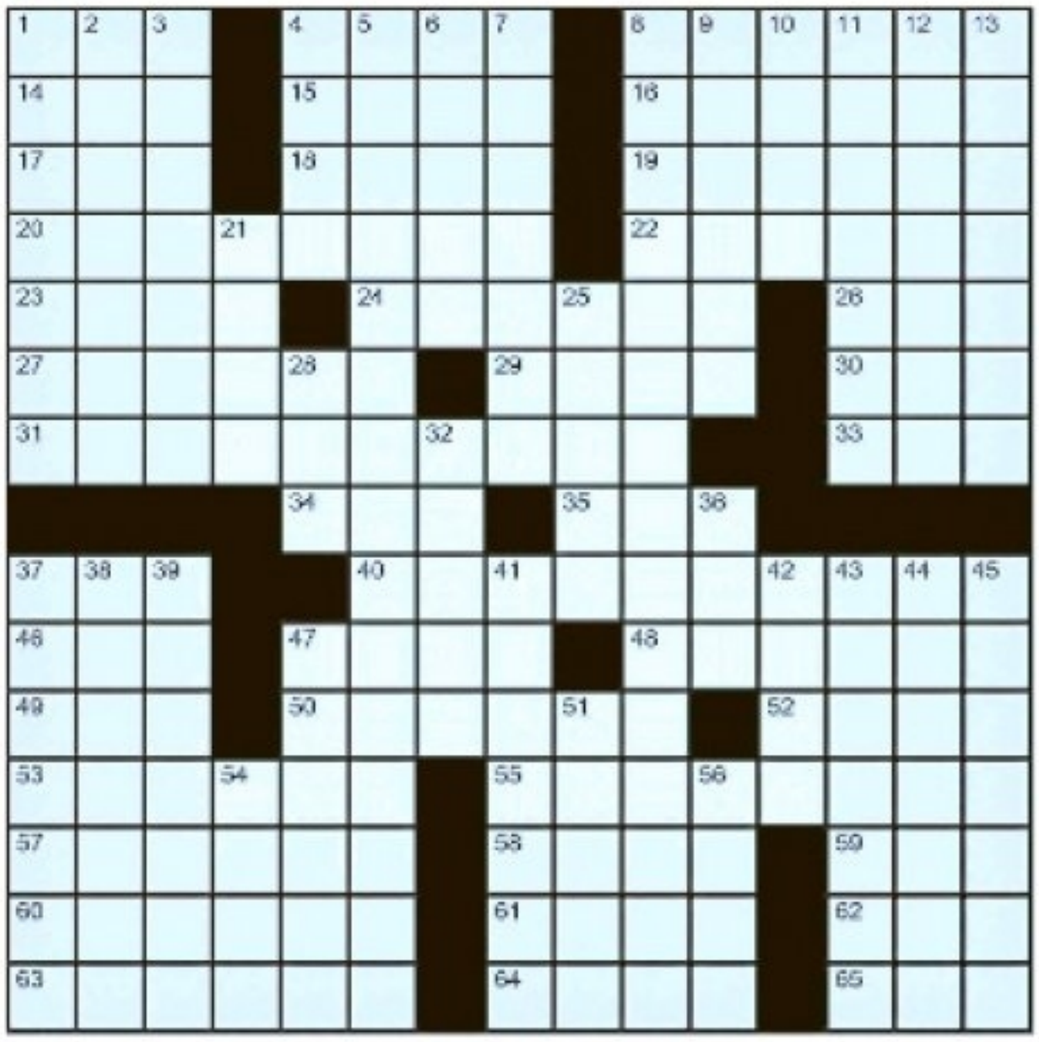
2. On the tortilla, makes stripes of the tuna mixture, grated carrots and avocado slices.

3. Wrap tightly in the tortilla. Slice in half. Repeat for second sandwich

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Seal herd
4. Take __ (Try the drink)
8. The animal TV production mascot Mimsie: monogram + meower
14. 'Is', plurally
15. Someone smitten's status
16. Medieval king of legend
17. One bone of the chest
18. Organic compound
19. Melon variety
20. Accepted the terms in the contract, for instance: 2 wds.
22. __ a go between (Is the mediator)
23. Nautically navigate
24. Solemn
26. Old English letter
27. Diner dish
29. Moisturizer content
30. Riddle-me-__
31. "Obladi, Oblada, __ __..." - The Beatles
33. "Hiss!"
34. TV show since '75
35. WWII soldiers
37. Gas stations of a multinational company headquartered in London, England
40. MuchMusic's old documentary-style series about recording artists: wd. + symbol + wd.
46. Grampus
47. Rip off
48. Daniel Defoe character, Robinson __
49. "__-haw!"
50. Metallica drummer Lars
52. Li'l owed money installments
53. Prefix to 'fugal' (Outwardly moving from the middle)
55. CBC's daytime lifestyles show: 2 wds.
57. Unrepeated happening
58. Grouping
59. __-disant (Self-styled)
60. "Fab!"
61. "Born Free" (1966) lioness
62. Veil heroine in ancient Greek myth
63. Fittings in clothing store changing rooms
64. Robert of "The Brady Bunch"
65. Washington politician, wee-ly

DOWN
1. Shade provider in a lovely painting
2. Paper crafting
3. Question/interview post-mission
4. Pulitzer-winning author James
5. Steep sedimentary sights on PEI's coastline: 2 wds.
6. "_ _ _ Extremes" by Billy Joel
7. Picasso's fashionable daughter, and namesakes
8. Kraft Dinner: wd. + symbol + wd
9. __ Ellis Ross (Diana Ross' actress daughter)
10. Washington state volcano, __. __. Helens
11. Those going after blowing away belongings
12. Songs of dawn
13. Ruins the hotel room
21. Fashionable magazine
25. Online journals
28. For instances, for short
32. Pomp and Circumstance Marches composer, Sir Edward __ (b.1857 - d.1934)
36. __ John A. Macdonald
37. Particular protest
38. Primping person
39. 1996 I Mother Earth album: '__ and Fish'
41. Bypassing being
42. __ ' tea (Orange Pekoe serving, perhaps)
43. Gradual method of learning
44. Like still-raw meat on the BBQ: 2 wds.
45. Sitting
47. "__' U.S.A." by The Beach Boys
51. South American country
54. Benicio Del __
56. Alum

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Be careful, because it's easy to overreact when dealing with others today, especially partners and close friends. Remember — you don't have to win all the time.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Avoid controversial subjects like politics, religion and racial issues today, because they will turn into a fight. Instead, look for ways to be supportive of co-workers on the job.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Disputes about shared property, children or even a romantic relationship might take place. It's easy to make a mountain out of a molehill today — take it easy.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Be patient with family members today, especially female relatives, because jealousy is likely. Furthermore, people will stifle their emotions today, then let them loose. (Yikes!)

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Avoid arguments with siblings and daily contacts today. In one way, you feel optimistic and upbeat, but this might change quickly if you cross swords with someone.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Financial arguments are likely today because people are quick to anger. Be careful, because it's easy to blow things out of proportion today.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
This is a tricky day. In one way it's positive, upbeat and happy (oh, yes). However, if someone disagrees with you, things could turn nasty very quickly. Stay calm.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Something going on behind the scenes concerns you today. Initially, it pleases you. Nevertheless, be careful, because someone might be jealous. (It might even be you.)

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Go gently when dealing with friends today, especially acquaintances in a group, because things might quickly turn nasty. Go with what works, and avoid what doesn't.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Avoid arguments with bosses, parents and VIPs today. For one thing, they will become public, and this might not look good for you. Stay chill.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Your enthusiasm for politics, religion or racial issues might quickly turn into an argument today, so be careful. Make sure you know your facts and that you stick to them.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
A dispute about shared property or inheritances might get out of hand today. Try to avoid this, if you can. Postpone this discussion till another day.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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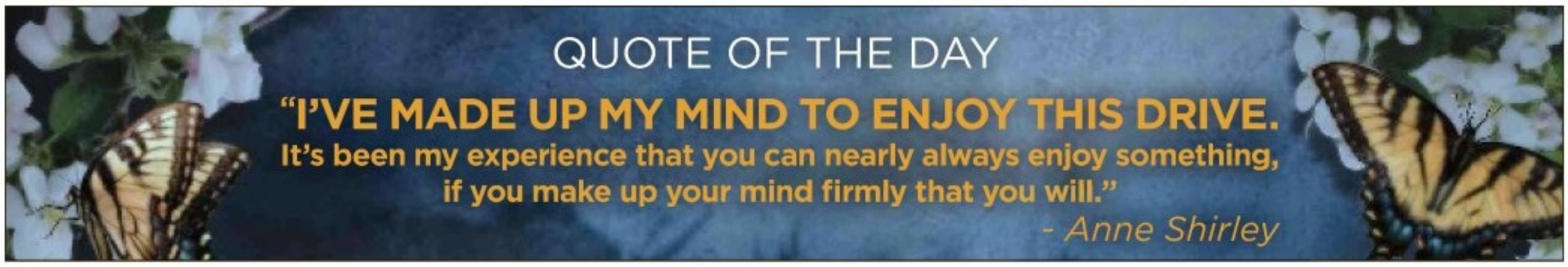
QUOTE OF THE DAY
"I'VE MADE UP MY MIND TO ENJOY THIS DRIVE.
It's been my experience that you can nearly always enjoy something,
if you make up your mind firmly that you will."
- Anne Shirley

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IT'S BETTER TO BE A MEMBER

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